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ABSTRACT

The New York State School Report Card is an important part of the effort to raise learning standards for all students. It is designed to provide information to the public on student performance and other measures of school and district performance. The 2000 report card has been changed to focus on measures of student progress on the new standards. This guide provides an overview of the changes, answers frequently asked questions, and contains descriptions of the state testing program and other performance measures. The Report Card contains an overview of academic performance, including results for some new tests and school and district statistics. The report compares the performance of a school with that of similar schools and compares the school district results with statewide results. The second part of the Report Card, the "Comprehensive Information Report," presents 3 years of results on other state assessments in addition to those covered in the overview. (SLD)

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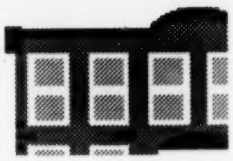

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCHOOL REPORT CARD 2000

Guide to Elementary and Middle School Examinations

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S. C Barrett

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For information contact

The New York State Education Department

Information, Reporting & Technology Services

Room 863 EBA

Albany, N.Y. 12234

(518) 474-7965

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Introduction

The ***New York State School Report Card*** is an important part of the Board of Regents effort to raise learning standards for all students. It is designed to provide information to the public on student performance and other measures of school and district performance. This year's report card has been changed to focus on measures of student progress on the new standards. This guide provides an overview of the changes, answers to frequently asked questions, and descriptions of the State testing program and other performance measures. We hope you will use the school report card to improve performance at your school.

This year's school report card is composed of complementary parts:

- *An Overview of Academic Performance*, and
- *A Comprehensive Information Report.*

The *Overview* includes results on the new grade 4 and 8 assessments in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics; performance of students who entered ninth grade in the 1996-97 school year on Regents English and mathematics examinations, and school performance on accountability measures. School and district statistics are provided in separate reports. The report compares the school's results with those of schools that are similar, and the companion school district report compares school district with statewide results.

The *Comprehensive Information Report (CIR)* presents three years of results on all other State assessments, specifically, Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) grade 5 writing, Program Evaluation Tests, all Regents Examinations, Second Language Proficiency Examinations, Regents Competency Tests, and Occupational Education Proficiency Examinations. The CIR provides information on high school completers, and attendance, suspension and dropout rates.

Questions & Answers

Q. ***What are the learning standards?***

A. The Board of Regents has established learning standards in seven curriculum areas. They describe broad expectations of what students should know, understand and be able to do as they progress through grades K-12 in New York State schools.

Q . ***What is the relationship between the school report card and the learning standards?***

A. Both are part of the statewide strategy for raising the level of student achievement. The strategy includes:

- **establishing standards in seven curriculum areas;**
- **changing the testing program to reflect the higher standards;**
- **raising high school graduation requirements;**
- **building the capacity of schools to help students achieve the standards;**
- **ensuring high standards and support for teachers and administrators;**
- **building partnerships to improve student achievement; and**
- **increasing accountability through public reporting of student performance.**

Q. ***How will school report cards help parents ensure their schools are meeting or exceeding the State standards?***

A. The school report card shows how well students are performing on the new State tests and the higher graduation requirements. Knowledge gained from the school report card on a school's strengths and weaknesses can be used to plan programs and curriculum and to allocate resources.

When comparing schools, remember that small differences among schools are meaningless and the pattern of differences among schools may change from year to year by chance.

Q. ***What information is reported on school accountability?***

A. The status of schools in meeting the school accountability performance criteria for fourth, eighth, and eleventh grades is reported. All students continuously enrolled at the school are included in these measures.

Q. ***What is a Local Assistance Plan?***

A. A district is required to prepare a local assistance plan (LAP) for schools that fall below 90 percent on any school accountability criterion. The plan must include activities to improve performance of all students and to enable the school to meet or exceed accountability criteria.

Q. ***How are the new fourth and eighth grade ELA and mathematics tests different from Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) tests?***

A. A key difference is that the new tests are not minimum competency tests. They are more challenging and require students to write extended responses to questions. The tests focus instruction on the new standards and assist in identifying the needs of each student.

Q. ***What information is provided about students with disabilities?***

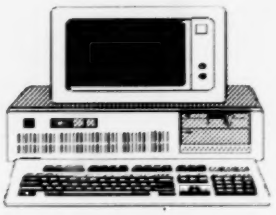
A. **The performance of students with disabilities on the new grades 4 and 8 tests is reported. Some students with disabilities are exempted from these tests because of their disability. This exemption is stated in the individualized educational program (IEP), developed by the district Committee on Special Education.**

Because students with disabilities may use modified testing procedures specified in their individualized program, caution should be used when comparing results among schools.

Q. ***How is the performance of English Language Learners (ELL), formerly referred to as limited English proficient (LEP) students, assessed and reported?***

A. In grades 4 and 8, students for whom English is a second language and who are not ready to participate effectively in the academic program are not required to take the State ELA assessment. Instead, their progress in learning English is measured and reported. The school report card shows

the number of students in this category and the number who have made appropriate progress in acquiring English. The mathematics tests are translated into other languages for use by ELL students.



Q. What are the new requirements for a high school diploma?

A. The Board of Regents has established more rigorous graduation requirements. Beginning with students who enter ninth grade in 2001, all students will be required to pass at least five Regents examinations and earn at least 22 units of credit, including four units in English, four in social studies, three in mathematics, three in science, one in the arts, one in a language other than English, one-half in health, and two in physical education. Higher requirements have been established for an advanced designation on the Regents diploma.

To ensure that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the standards, the Board of Regents established safety net provisions, including a five-year phase-in of the requirement that students pass five Regents exams; the option for districts to award local diplomas to students scoring 55-64 on required Regents exams; and allowing students with disabilities who fail a Regents exam to demonstrate competency using the Regents competency test in that subject area. These provisions start with students who first entered grade 9 in 1996-97 and end with students who first enter grade 9 in 2001-02.

Q. ***How can parents help their children meet higher standards?***

A. Parents can help children by talking with them and reading aloud to them; asking teachers what is expected at school; and monitoring children's learning and homework.

Q. ***Why do some schools have variances from the State testing requirements?***

A. Variances were granted to selected schools to give Department-approved alternative examinations. Schools do not report student results on these alternative examinations to the Department. Therefore, in these cases, the school report card

displays an asterisk in place of examination results. No variances to give alternative assessments have been granted for the grade 4 and 8 tests.

Q. ***What are similar schools?***

A. **To help parents and community members determine how their school compares with schools that serve similar students and have similar resources, we have established** ***Similar School*** **groups. The**

following factors are considered in grouping schools: a) the grade levels served by the school; b) rates of student poverty and English Language Learners; and c) the income and property wealth of district residents.

The measure of student poverty is the proportion of children in the school who participate in the free lunch program. Free lunch participation declines in higher grades. Nonetheless, since groups are composed of schools serving similar grades, we believe this is a valid approach.

Q. ***How can I get more information on the school report card and the new higher standards?***

A. You may call the State Education Department at (518) 474-7965 or contact us through the Internet at the following address: rptcard@mail.nysed.gov. Copies of the New York State Report Card for all public schools and districts, information on the standards and new State assessments, and other information can be found on our web site: http:\\www.nysed.gov.

The State Testing Program

New State Assessments

Grade 4 English Language Arts

Grade 4 Mathematics

Grade 8 English Language Arts

Grade 8 Mathematics

The new grades 4 and 8 tests are designed to help ensure that all students reach the higher learning standards set by the Board of Regents. The tests challenge students to demonstrate their ability to read, write, listen and use mathematics, and show whether students are getting the foundation knowledge they need to succeed in later grades.

On these tests, performance is indicated in four levels, each encompassing a range of scores. The levels, defined in the *Overview*, describe how well students are progressing on the standards.

Performance is reported in terms of mean scale scores and the percentage of all tested students who scored at each of the four levels. Performance is also reported separately for general education students and students with disabilities.

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